

Basket-Willow Growing

INDUSTRY BEING FOSTERED BY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

BY ELLIOTT MITCHELL.

Secretary Wilson's statement that there are no bad acres in the United States is again brought to light through the efforts of the Department of Agriculture to induce more general attention to the culture of the basket willow. There are very many farms in this country which contain some small land, and through which runs a small stream. This portion of the farm is too often allowed to run to waste, dense growths of weeds and scrub prospering in the rich, moist soil, and the locality rarely visited by the farmer except when in search of some stray cattle which have come down to the brook for a drink.

Although introduced in this country as early as 1840, willow growing in America occurs only in restricted localities throughout a relatively small portion of the country. On account of the isolation of these groups of growers with little or no connection, and because the growers are not in touch with basket makers, there has been little chance for improvement.

bundles of these cuttings should then be kept in running water until small leaves or sprouts appear, when they will be ready to peel.

Pretty White Willows.

Willows thus peeled are of a fine white color, while those which undergo steaming or boiling for the removal of the bark of a dark color, being stained by coloring matter contained in the bark, but experience has shown that the articles made of boiled willow are much more durable than those made from the white rods of spring peeling. The operation is so simple that old persons incapable of arduous labor can make fair wages doing this sort of work.

And yet, the farmer may ask, is there a market for willow ware in this country? The United States consumes the largest amount of willow ware of any country in the world. From one district in Germany alone, as far back as 1893, in spite of the panic existing at that time, \$230,000



American Baskets Made in Richmond, Virginia.

Peeling Green Willow for Basket Work.



While this is not true of the conditions in western New York, the trade there demands only the cheapest grade of the steamed willow. But steam-peeled rods have a dark color, and hence cannot be used for fine baskets.

Willows Grow on Corn Land.

The general idea is that willows will grow only on very swampy ground, but experience shows that all serious attempts made on well-drained soil, even though of poor quality, have been successful. The ground is prepared just the same as it would be for corn or wheat. Willow planting generally is done in the autumn; should be in rows, the sets or cuttings, according to older methods being placed about ten inches in length and planted in the ground until about only an inch and a half protrudes above the ground. Almost without

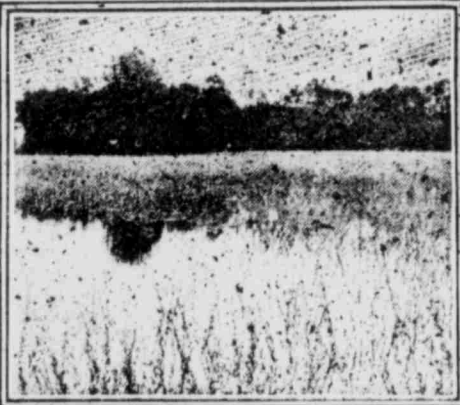
worth of fine willow ware was imported. Since that date, however, the value of willow imports has decreased, due, probably, to the increase of willow growing in this country.

The manufacture of willow is what might be termed a "house industry," in which the men, women and children are engaged in peeling and splitting the rods and weaving the baskets under contract.

Big Crops This Year.

Secretary Wilson has returned to Washington from a tour of the Northwest, where he was shown some great crop yields. He expresses it as his belief that the farmers have more money now than ever was theirs before, and that with such full treasure chests there is no danger of an industrial panic. The year's crop of wheat, corn and oats will be larger, according to Mr. Wilson's experienced judgment, than were the big crops of last year. He says that the area capable of raising durum or macaroni wheat is now pushing well into the desert region. The yield of this wheat alone this year, it is believed, will exceed 20,000,000 bushels, a wheat, by the way, which grows where other wheat will not grow and which six years ago was an unknown thing among American growers.

Mr. Wilson gives us the pleasing information that housekeepers will find the prices of meat, dairy products and



A WILLOW SWAMP.

exception through the country willows are planted from 9 inches to a foot apart in rows 2½ feet to a yard distant from one another, thus allowing from about 14,000 to 23,000 to the acre. This method of wide planting is followed for several reasons, it of course being cheaper to plant fewer cuttings, and the cost of cultivation being reduced, the wide rows allowing for the use of a plow. It is also understood and held by the higher authorities that the more shoots from a stool or stump, the greater the yield. Where the cuttings have been planted on meadow or corn land, the first year the rows are hoed two or three times, and later run through with a light plow. In later years only the plow is used. On bottomland, however, they are only cultivated once, and therefore only grassed with a sickle.

To Produce Straight Rods.

The Department of Agriculture has found that though there may be objection to close planting on account of increased cost and greater amount of cultivation necessary, both a heavier yield and longer, more even-sized and better rods are obtained—straighter, less branched, and less tapering. While a yield of four tons of green rods per acre may be obtained in twelve years where the hots are planted in rows three feet apart, with a distance of one foot between hots, over six tons are obtained from an acre planted 29x9 inches, in only ten years. The Department also advises that the cuttings should be not less than twelve inches in length, and planted with the buds pointing upward, and that when placed in the ground each cutting should be perfectly perpendicular. When willows are planted close together all weeds and grass, the foes of the willow, should be kept out.

Osiers should be cut the first year, even if no valuable material can be obtained, for if this is delayed until the second year, there is apt to be a tendency to branch, so that less valuable material can be cut. This cutting should be done during the winter, from November 1 to March 1, and as near the ground as possible. The

MAKING WILLOW HAMPER.

poultry lower this winter than they have been for some time, owing to the heavy grain crops. Fattening cattle on corn at 50 cents a bushel, he said, is not a profitable performance, and that is what the farmer has been doing for the past three years; but with this year's grain crops, the farmer should find at the end of the season that his margin of profit is greater, and in the due course of events, meats should be cheaper.

To Make Old-Fashioned Yeast.

Boll two ounces of the best hops in four quarts of water for half an hour; strain and let the liquor cool down to the warmth of new milk, then put in a small handful of salt and half a pound of sugar, beat up one pound of the best flour with some of the liquor and then mix well all together. Let this mixture stand until the third day, then add three pounds of potatoes, boiled and mashed, let it stand a day longer, stirring frequently and keeping it near the fire in an earthen vessel, then strain and put in bottles and it is ready for use. The advantage of this yeast is that it ferments spontaneously not requiring the aid of other yeast. If well cooked and kept in a cool place, it will keep six months or more. It has been thoroughly tested and never fails to make delicious light bread.

Chemist Wiley on Pure Food.

Dr. Harvey W. Wiley, the chief of the Bureau of Chemistry of the Department of Agriculture, has just returned from a tour of the British Isles, France and Germany, where he has been studying the preparation of food products—packing, shipping, and human consumption of foods. Dr. Wiley is a pure food man. He believes that we should all have pure food, or at least know what it is adulterated with, and he is one of the most active advocates in the country of national pure food legislation.



WILLOW IN THE PIT, SPROUTED, READY FOR PEELING.

which appeals to me beyond all others—the effect of impure foods on invalids. People who are under the care of a physician, and are compelled to eat prepared foods should know at least what they are getting. If the foods which they buy as "pure," are found upon analysis to contain ingredients which have proven harmful to them, they should have some recourse at law to punish the maker of this fraudulent food. A simple instance is sufficient to illustrate the point. There is at this time a great demand for gluten flours. They are recommended for certain diseases, and there are various preparations on the market which are sold at high prices. Many of the so-called gluten flours contain but a small percentage of pure gluten; they are "filled" with chalk and starchy substances, and are not at all what is claimed for them. This is one example; a hundred others could be named.

GIANT KANSAS CORN.

Exciting Experiences of Boy Lost in Field of Growing Grain.

A report which seems to have come from the Portland Exposition states that a great object of curiosity there is a corn stalk of mammoth size reaching almost up to the very roof of the agricultural building. The history of the stalk is perhaps as marvelous as the object itself.

It appears that prior to the last hot wave which swept over the country, a farmer in Kansas sent his fifteen-year-old son out to take a look over the corn field and notify him of the prospects. In order to do this the son went to the implement shed which this wise farmer had provided and procured a ladder with which he climbed one of the cornstalks. After surveying a fine growth of corn for miles around, the boy started to climb down, but in his excitement at the prospects of the golden harvest which



PEELED WILLOWS.

his father would reap, he had failed to notice the rapidity of the growth of the stalk which he had ascended. As quickly as he stepped down, so much more rapidly the stalk seemed to grow, and he was no nearer the bottom than when he started.

His father, noting the absence of his son, saw that it would be useless for him to hunt through the jungle of waving corn, so he climbed to the top of his windmill and his anxious eyes beheld his boy waving his red bandana in despair. Hastily summoning his neighbor and his other two sturdy sons, they proceeded with axes to chop down the wicked stalk. Their axes, however, failed to find the same mark twice, so rapidly did the stalk shoot upward. Night came on without their accomplishing anything and the boy was left to what appeared to be a terrible fate. Like most Kansas boys, however, he was awake to all his opportunities, and existed for a long time on the raw corn, having consumed so much that he later notified his parents by means of a message written on one of the dried corn leaves that he was getting so fat there was danger of the stalk breaking with his weight. He wrote that he believed a more balanced ration would relieve his fears, suggesting the planting of beans at the base of the cornstalk as an expedient.

However, before the beans could secure enough growth, the drought came on and stopped the growth of the stalk and the boy was enabled to climb down, thus saving his life. As mementos of the occasion, the lad gathered up the corn cobs which he had thrown down from his lofty seat, amounting to something over four bushels and a peck, and on these he has been working, turning them into corn-cob pipes which he is exhibiting at the Truth Bureau of the Portland Exposition.

Prior to 1789 the Speaker of the House of Commons was paid a salary of 5 pounds a day and a fee of 5 pounds on every private bill passed.

CONTROL OF CANAL MATTERS.

Transfer to the State Department Under Secretary Root.

It seems to be generally accepted that the control of all matters in connection with the construction of the Panama canal is to be transferred from the War Department to the State Department. Under the law the work is to be performed under the direction of the President, and he originally intrusted it to Secretary Taft on the general ground that all national engineering works were properly the business of the War Department. It is now realized that Secretary Taft has a great deal more than his pro-



From Washington Post.

portionate share of the government work and responsibility, and it is with a view of relieving him of a portion of his official burdens that the President suggested the advisability of the transfer of the Panama Canal work to the State Department.

Secretary Root's acceptance of the trust would enable Secretary Taft to devote more of his time to the consideration of important questions affecting the government of the Philippines and the business of the army generally. It is known that Secretary Taft has no personal ambitions in connection with the Panama canal work, and is entirely willing, as a matter of general expediency, that its supervision should be transferred to Secretary Root as the head of the State Department.

Secretary Root, however, with all his ability for hard work, is understood to have no hankering after the canal job.

THE FLOOD OF NOAH.

Geology Proves the Foundation of the Biblical Account.

There are Biblical doubters who scoff at the idea that there ever was a great flood, yet the testimony of the geologists, to say nothing of Ignatius Donnelly's theory of the submerged continent of Atlantis, proves that at one time the entire earth's surface was covered with water. Professor Wright of Oberlin, who has made geology a life study, brings us new light upon the subject. In writing on the subject of the "Contributions of Geology to the Credibility of the Flood" he states that the level of the land changes constantly. The highest mountains were once below the sea-level, as is proven by the finding of sea-shells on the summits of the highest peaks. All of Central Asia was once covered by water and is now drying up. In fact the drying out process has been going on for thousands of years. The Turkestan and Siberian low-lands were once submerged, while evidence is shown that the Desert of Gobi was once a body of water equal to the Mediterranean in size and depth.

The valley of the Jordan in ages back was covered with water to a depth of from 1,000 to 1,400 feet, while changes of level and climate in Asia seem to prove that the Deluge once passed over the entire country.

Uncle Sam's "Conscience Fund."

The conscience fund of the Treasury is not, as is popularly supposed, an idle fund which is added to from time to time, lies dormant, and is never used. Contributions to this so-called fund are turned into the regular government receipts and on the books appear under the heading "To Account Conscience." This account was opened by the United States government in 1811. It would not be fair to infer from this fact that the American conscience had its awakening at so late a date in the country's history, but that year witnessed the first return to the government, as the result of the "still, small voice," of money of which it had been defrauded some time before.

President Madison found on his desk one morning an unsigned letter in which the writer confessed to defrauding the government of \$2, for which his conscience had made him suffer sorely. This amount was enclosed with the request that it be turned into the National Treasury, the writer expressing the hope that this full restitution and repentance would restore a clear and easy conscience. Contributions have since been received varying in amounts from a 2-cent postage stamp to ten thousand dollars or more.

Up to date the amount received from those who have defrauded the government and become conscience-stricken is over \$400,000.

A Very Accurate Description.

Hon. George S. Legare, a member of Congress from South Carolina and a graduate of a Washington law school, has a sense of humor and enjoys a good joke even at the expense of the members of his profession. He does not uphold the "smart" lawyer and tells of a case in his native city of Charleston where a pettifogging attorney was cross-examining an old negro witness.

After asking the old darkey a number of catch questions in an endeavor to confuse him, he finally asked the witness his occupation.

"Se a carpentah, sah."

"Dey calls me a Jack-leg carpentah."

"What is a 'Jack-leg' carpenter?"

"He's a carpentah what ain't a fust-class carpentah, sah!"

"Well, explain fully what you understand a 'Jack-leg' carpenter to be," insisted the lawyer.

"Boss, 'deed Ah clah to goodness Ah dunno how ter 'splain any mo' 'bout a Jack-leg carpentah 'ceptin' hit am jes' de same dunfance as dey is betwix' you an' a fust-class lawyah, sah!"

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